

SOIL TESTING INFORMATION



Why test your soil?

- Match plants to your specific soil conditions
- Basis for using lime and fertilizer
 - Diagnosing problems
- Evaluating nutrient balances
- Protecting the environment

What does a standard MSU Extension soil test tell you?

- The basic texture of your soil
- The pH of your soil
- The nutrient levels of phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium, and,
- A fertilizer recommendation based on the type of plants you are growing

The standard MSU Extension soil test does not provide:

- Nitrogen Content • Toxic Contamination
- Organic Matter • Soil Borne Pests

(Organic matter, nitrogen, soil borne pests and other nutrients **can** be tested through the Soil & Plant Nutrient Lab for an extra fee, please ask an MSUE employee for details)

Directions for testing in Wexford County

- Go through the entire area to be tested (the lawn, garden, field, etc.) collecting 15-20 small samples of soil from many locations in a zig-zag pattern. If one area has particularly good drainage, and another very poor drainage, make sure to collect samples from both these locations. The objective is to create one big sample which accurately represents the entire area to be tested.



- Take samples from root level (approximately three to nine inches deep).
- Combine the many samples from throughout the testing area and mix thoroughly. Of this mixture, extract approximately **two cups** of soil to submit as your sample.
- Note that all samples must be *completely dry* when they are submitted. We cannot mail wet soil to the lab. If your sample is still damp, spread it out on a paper plate for a day or two, until it air-dries.

- Bring your sample in a plastic bag or other container to our office.

An extension employee will ask you a few questions about the history of the soil (what has been grown in it, if anything) and what you plan on growing in it. These questions will help the employee accurately fill out the soil test form that will accompany your sample to campus.



The Soil and Plant Nutrient Laboratory on the MSU campus analyzes your soil sample, and sends the results back to the Wexford County Extension Office via email. Our Agriculture Educator will interpret the results for you, make some recommendations and then mail or email the information to you.

The entire turn around time is about 2 weeks. The total cost for a basic soil test is \$12.00/each. Checks can be made payable to "MSU Extension".

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